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12. LARGE GREY BABBLER (*TURDOIDES MALCOLMI*) TRAPPED FOR THE TABLE

It was not surprising to find the large grey babbler *Turdoides malcolmi* (Sykes) listed as a bird that needs conservation, in a brochure issued by the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh. The present status of this species, which is described as common in Deccan Plateau, now calls for its conservation. Factors that have contributed to its destruction in Deccan Plateau cannot be analysed here, but one of the major factors, which might have lead to its decline in Chhattisgarh State, is intensive trapping. The large grey babbler is commonly served instead of quail in roadside hotels, as the incident related below will confirm.

One of my junior officers had brought a bagful of quail. Luckily, before his departure, the

so-called quail were examined, and to our utmost surprise, they were in fact large grey babblers tied in bunches by the legs. Their tail feathers had been pulled out and wings broken. The birds were photographed and later released into the bush.

Large grey babblers are commonly sold and served as quail, and customers in their ignorance, relish the babblers. No helping hand has come forward to save them.

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13. MALABAR WHISTLING-THRUSH *MYIOPHONUS HORSFIELDII*
IN THE GIR FORESTS, SAURASHTRA, GUJARAT

A Malabar whistling-thrush *Myiophonus horsfieldii* (Vigors) was seen continuously for a week from April 7 to 15, 1998 in the Gir Forests, Saurashtra. It used to arrive at a spot on the riverbed near Nanava Ness at around 0700 hrs daily, and feed on insects off cow dung, river cliffs, riverbed, dry leaves, humus and on the bark of trees. It was not shy and allowed observers to approach even to about 3 m. When disturbed, it flew away, uttering a low whistle. The thrush was easily identified by its blue black colour, glistening cobalt blue on the forehead and shoulders, and its black bill and legs. The bird

was photographed for record.

The northernmost record of the Malabar whistling-thrush is south Rajasthan and its presence in the Gir is an extension of its range into the Saurashtra peninsula. Its occurrence in the dry deciduous forests of the Gir is also an unusual change from the usual habitat of Evergreen and Moist Deciduous Forests.

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